



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture-Rural Development
Office of the State Director Florida/USVI
P.O. Box 147010, Gainesville, FL 32614 . Email: ellen.boukari@fl.usda.gov
Web: www.rurdev.usda.gov/fl/

Contact Ellen Boukari (352) 338-3414

JACKSON COUNTY ARC BREAKS GROUND ON NEW FACILITY

MARIANNA, FL, March 19, 2004,— “Today is a good day for Jackson County, and a good day for developmentally disabled residents in the Marianna and Jackson County area,” said Charles W. Clemons, Sr., State Director USDA Rural Development during a groundbreaking and ceremonial check presentation to the Jackson County Association for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (Jackson County ARC).

"Developmental disabilities are just as prevalent in rural America as they are in urban areas. Rural Development financial support can make the difference in ensuring that programs such as those provided by the Jackson County ARC are available to rural residents. Our citizens who are living with disabilities face many challenges. Our challenge is to help them become more independent, more productive, and more engaged in their families and communities," said Clemons.

Today's groundbreaking marked a new beginning for developmentally disabled residents in the Marianna and Jackson County area. Jackson County ARC is a community based not-for-profit corporation that operates a training and educational facility for handicapped individuals. The ARC serves the needs of approximately 75 mentally handicapped men and women by helping them to learn, work, and live. Construction of the new 11,800 square feet training facility will provide space and resources for an estimated 105 individuals.

Jackson County ARC has been awarded \$1,622,219 in Rural Development Community Facilities funds, (\$1,281,719 loan and \$340,500 grant funding) for construction of the building. Today's check ceremony for \$259,800 represents the most recent funding provided by Rural Development toward the facility that will feature 15 offices, two conference rooms, kitchen, dining room and three classrooms, enhancing the expansion of education, training and employment opportunities for the ARC's developmentally challenged clients. The new training center will replace leased space currently housing the Jackson County ARC. The current 11,000 square foot facility is in poor condition with an estimated 25-percent of the building unusable due to water intrusion. The remaining portion of the building is in need of extensive repairs.

Rural Development funding to the Jackson County Association for Retarded Citizens, Inc. demonstrates President Bush's commitment in supporting investments in America's rural communities, and his goal of ensuring that people with mental retardation enjoy a quality of life that promotes independence, self-determination, and participation as productive members of society. USDA Rural Development serves as the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers financial and technical assistance to improve the quality of life for rural residents. Further information on USDA Rural Development can be obtained by contacting any USDA Service Center or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/fl>